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24 February 1956

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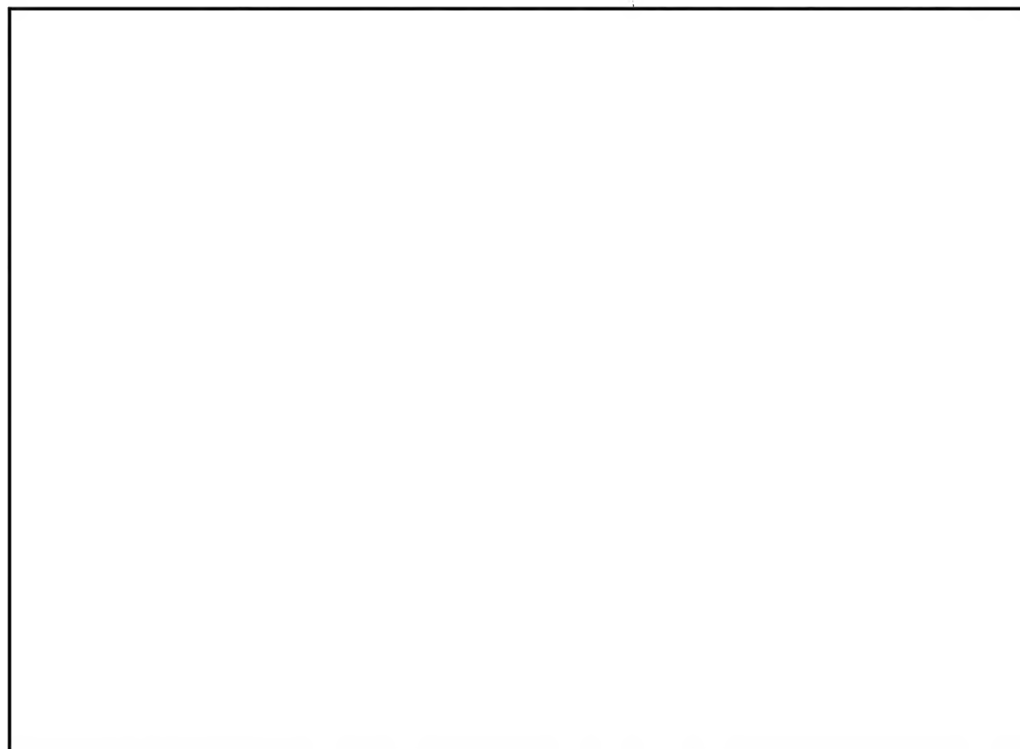
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OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DIA and DOS review(s) completed.

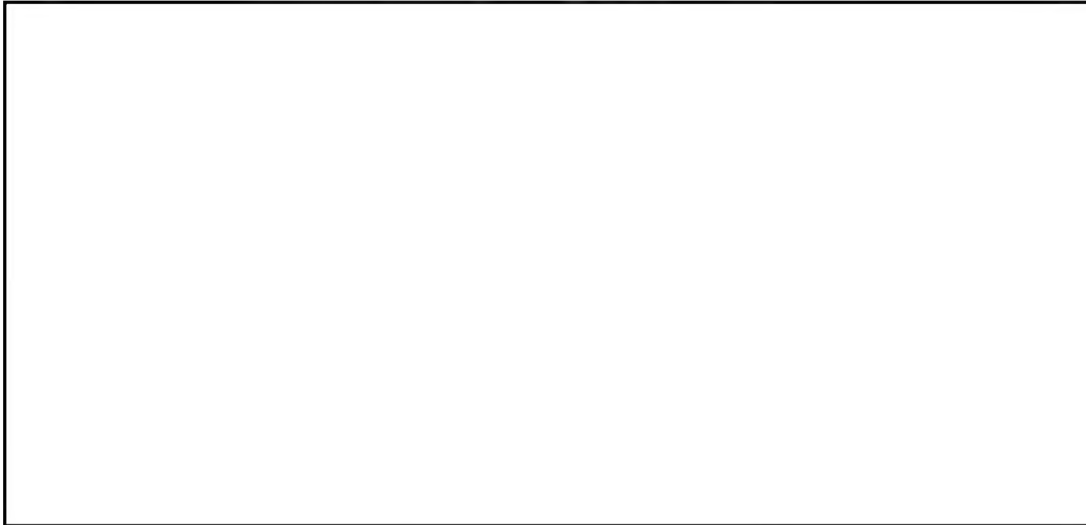
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4. MOSCOW MAKES ECONOMIC OVERTURES TO LEBANON

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The arrival in Lebanon on 21 February of a "survey team" of six high-level Soviet engineers is the latest move in the USSR's campaign to participate in development programs of Arab states. The Soviet engineers reportedly are interested in oil refineries and storage tanks, textile factories, construction

of harbors, bridges and railway lines. The similarity of this list to the industries covered in a detailed market survey made by Czechoslovakia several months ago suggests that the Soviet "survey team" will probably attempt to negotiate detailed contracts on terms attractive to the Lebanese.

In the last several weeks Beirut has signed trade agreements with Poland, Rumania and Communist China. (Prepared by ORR)

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 23 February)

An Israeli spokesman alleged that Syrian riflemen opened fire on Israeli fishing boats near the northeastern sector of Lake Tiberias on 23 February. No casualties were reported. An Israeli spokesman also said that Egyptians had fired on an Israeli patrol in the Gaza strip on 22 February, wounding five Israelis.

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Syria is increasing its strength on the Syrian-Israeli border. Twelve tanks, six half-tracks, and six trucks were reported moving toward Quneitra on 20 February. The American army attaché reports that Syrian troops at or near the frontier appear to be at full strength--four brigades--and that the usual force of 11 or 12 tanks may now have been doubled.

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UN truce supervisor General Burns told the American consul general in Jerusalem on 23 February after an interview with Israeli foreign minister Sharett that he was "confronted on all outstanding subjects with a negative attitude on the part of Israel." Burns said that Israel has (1) taken no steps to implement the UN secretary general's proposals which it had "accepted unconditionally," (2) rejected his suggestion to discontinue daylight motor patrols along the Gaza strip, (3) shown no interest in his suggestions for improving the situation at Lake Tiberias, and (4) reasserted its "right" to resume work at Banat Yacov unless the Arabs agree to the Johnston plan.

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Major Sarraj, head of Syrian army intelligence and leader of the dominant junior officer clique which advocates a tough policy against Israel, in a talk with the American army attaché in Damascus appeared to be much less warlike than before his visit to Cairo. Sarraj was most impressed with the growing strength of the

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Egyptian army and its new equipment. He said that the military talks with Egypt had been satisfactory, that Egypt and Syria had a full understanding, and that an Israeli attack would bring rapid retaliation whether launched against Syria, Jordan, or Egypt. Sarraj did not believe that Israel would attack Lebanon.

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A Japanese Foreign Ministry official has inquired whether a change in policy is indicated by the lifting of the American embargo on arms to the Near East and Britain's statement that it proposes to continue shipments. Because of the depressed condition of the industry following the virtual cessation of American orders, Japanese businessmen have been searching for new markets. An Israeli mission is now visiting Japan, reportedly in the hope of purchasing arms and military equipment.

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